

VZCZCXRO3622  
PP RUEHROV  
DE RUEHJM #1652/01 2541511  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 111511Z SEP 09  
FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6054  
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 3176  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 001652

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR SHAPIRO/KUMAR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/10/2019  
TAGS: [PREF](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAL](#) [KUNR](#) [IS](#) [EG](#)  
SUBJECT: NASER AL-QIDWA ON FATAH, PALESTINIAN  
RECONCILIATION, NEGOTIATIONS, AND UNRWA 60TH ANNIVERSARY

REF: JERUSALEM 1630

Classified By: CG Daniel Rubinstein for reason 1.4 (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. Newly-elected FCC member Nasir al Qidwa said Fatah's abilities to overcome internal rivalries will determine whether it ultimately emerges stronger after its recent Congress in Bethlehem. He is skeptical that Fatah is prepared for new elections, despite favorable polls, and believes factional reconciliation must come first. Al Qidwa advocated a two-phased approach to reintegrating Hamas into the Palestinian political landscape. In the first phase, he said, Fatah should offer limited enticements to Hamas, in return for commitments to nonviolence and restoring Palestinian unity. Acceptance of the Quartet principles would remain the precondition for full participation in the government. If Hamas refuses this offer, he said, Fatah will be in a stronger position to move into elections. On negotiations, he urged that if the USG cannot achieve a settlement freeze, it should instead seek a UNSCR reiterating the illegality of settlements. Finally, the CG briefed al Qidwa on USG concerns over the UNRWA 60th anniversary event. End summary.

¶2. (C) In an introductory call with the Consul General on September 10, newly-elected FCC member Nasir al Qidwa said the success of Fatah's rebuilding project depends on two variables: its ability to overcome internal rivalries, and the new leadership's ability to establish a productive relationship with Abu Mazen. At this point, the new FCC meets daily, but "we are just getting to know each other and exploring our thinking," he added.

¶3. (C) Al Qidwa was critical of Egypt's role in factional reconciliation talks. He said the latest Egyptian proposal (reftel) focuses on practical bridging formulas, such as a "joint committee" to oversee the government before elections, but ignores the more important political differences between the factions. "We tried this in Mecca, and it didn't work," he said, noting any governing arrangement formed on an unclear political platform is "a ridiculous idea."

Don't Believe the Polls

¶4. (C) Al Qidwa said he was less confident than others in Fatah that a rush to elections was the best alternative. In his view, polling accurately reflects a stronger base of support for Fatah than Hamas. However, these figures ignore large numbers of undecided voters, and it remains to be seen whether Fatah can improve its organizational capacity in time to attract their support. Al Qidwa said the "decisive" factor would be whether Fatah can revive the promise of a negotiated two-state solution. "That is up to President Obama," he noted.

15. (C) Instead of a rush to elections, Al Qidwa said, Fatah should consider a two-phased approach to reconciliation. First, Fatah should focus on building a consensus on the "basic principles of a united political system." Al Qidwa defined these principles as (1) the establishment of a Palestinian state on the 1967 borders; (2) a "real commitment to democracy and all that it entails, such as political pluralism," (3) the unity of the Palestinian people and their territory; and (4) compliance with international humanitarian law, particularly injunctions against (Palestinian) violence targeting (Israeli) civilians.

16. (C) Al Qidwa acknowledged these principles fell short of the Quartet's own, and would therefore not be enough for Hamas to participate in the PA government. However, incremental incentives could be offered in return, such as participation in PA administrative bodies or the Palestinian Legislative Council. Arab governments would support these principles "from the heart," as opposed to the Quartet principles, which they support only in response to international pressure, he claimed.

17. (C) An incremental approach could lay the groundwork for Hamas to peacefully exit from power, al Qidwa asserted. "We would effectively be moving to a Turkish model," he said, adding, "by establishing the principle that (Hamas) must be willing to cede power." Al Qidwa gave his strategy less than a fifty-fifty chance of success. If it failed, Fatah would be in a better position to call for new Palestinian

JERUSALEM 00001652 002 OF 002

elections, since Hamas would be viewed as obstructionist. (Comment: Al Qidwa's thinking represents the most accommodationist line we have heard from the new FCC; most of his counterparts advocate reconciliation through new elections or even more hard-line views.)

If No Freeze, Call For A UNSCR On Settlements  
-----

18. (C) On the peace process, al Qidwa said President Obama deserves credit for convincing Arabs at least to hear the USG out on its approach. "But we cannot help but worry, or ask ourselves, 'is this for real?' The Administration put its finger on the right issue - colonization of the land. Without a (freeze), there will be no two-state solution." He went on to note that "a freeze is far more important for me than any USG statement, even one with more advanced political language." Only an end to settlement activity can alter dynamics on the ground, he added.

19. (C) Al Qidwa predicted the Administration would face difficulties in "remaining faithful" to its settlement policy, and may ultimately have to come up with an alternative. A settlement freeze is not an end in itself, he noted, but a prerequisite for launching successful negotiations. There is no point in negotiating checkpoint removal, for example, if the settlements they are designed to protect remain in place, al Qidwa said. Therefore, if a true freeze cannot be achieved, the USG should call for a UN Security Council Resolution that reconfirms the illegality of settlements. "The intention is not to punish (the GOI), but to change the political dynamic (in Israel)," he said. Simply suggesting the USG might consider a resolution could affect Israeli behavior, he added.

Palestinians and the UN  
-----

110. (C) Turning to the UN, al Qidwa asked for an update on preparations for UNRWA's 60th anniversary. The Consul General said the USG had been deeply disappointed by the Arab Group's reversion to a business-as-usual approach. He said

we were encouraging all involved to review the role their UN missions had played at the September 8 Steering Committee meeting, and to reconsider their objections in advance of the planned event. Al Qidwa said he did not see a principled reason to object to a GOI speaking role at any UN forum, but admitted to being uninformed on the Palestinian Observer Mission's actual positions.

RUBINSTEIN